



The Handbook for Small Business Customer Service Managers



“ Customer satisfaction is our north star and memorable interactions with the community are key to loyalty and retention. ”

James Haliburton

Director of Community & Customer Support,
SoundCloud



Awesome customer service can help your business grow.

Does it sometimes seem like you're always being asked to do more with less? It's not unusual for customer service managers at growing businesses to be asked to help more customers, faster, on more channels — but without more resources. Everyone recognizes the importance of customer service, but that doesn't always translate into more budget or a bigger team. Sure you can squeeze every drop of productivity out of your agents, but there are smarter ways to wow your customers and make more impact with your existing customer service team. Here's what every small business customer service manager needs to know to be wildly successful.



“ It’s essential for us to have the right support team because support is directly tied to our word of mouth growth. ”

Ashley King
Customer Support Manager,
99designs



Hiring the right people for your team is really, really, really important.

When your small business is big enough to hire dedicated agents, you need to make sure you hire the right ones. Nothing is as important as having the right staff. After all, you can train them to use your product but no matter how hard you try, you can’t teach the desire to help people. Before you build your team, think about what’s most important to you. Some startups prize good writing skills more than anything. Others want a great phone presence. Whatever’s important to you, make sure you hire energetic, caring people who want to help customers.



You need to choose the right support solution for your team, and choose it fast.

“ Having a customer support solution is not so much a matter of importance as a matter of necessity. ”

Duane Hunt

Vice President, Operations,
Formstack

Sure Gmail is free, and it might be everything you need. But what happens when you start to outgrow it? Messages are lost. Multiple people respond to the same questions, sometimes with different answers. And, while folders can be used to categorize requests, they don't give you a way to assign emails to agents, show a priority level, or run reports. One of the first jobs of a customer service manager at a small company is finding a solution that will grow with you. Implementing a solution early in your company's lifecycle can have huge benefits later. Look for one that's costeffective, easy to deploy, and that your agents like to use.



“ We don’t measure our team on whether they can close a case at first contact. We encourage our agents to talk to customers as long and as often as it takes to make them happy. ”

Alexis Chapman

Director Customer Operations,
One Kings Lane



The way you measure your support team directly influences the way they interact with customers.

Although many companies evaluate agents based on what percentage of cases they can close after the first email or phone call, or how quickly they can close them, you might want to consider other ways to measure your support team’s success. What if you encourage your agents to spend time with customers? Will customers become more loyal? Will they be more likely to recommend your company to others? Some of today’s most successful startups are using nontraditional measurements of focusing exclusively on CSAT to ensure their teams are driving toward success.



“ Don’t silo customer service as a company cost center. A great sign of superior service is when it is integrated as a mindset across a company. ”

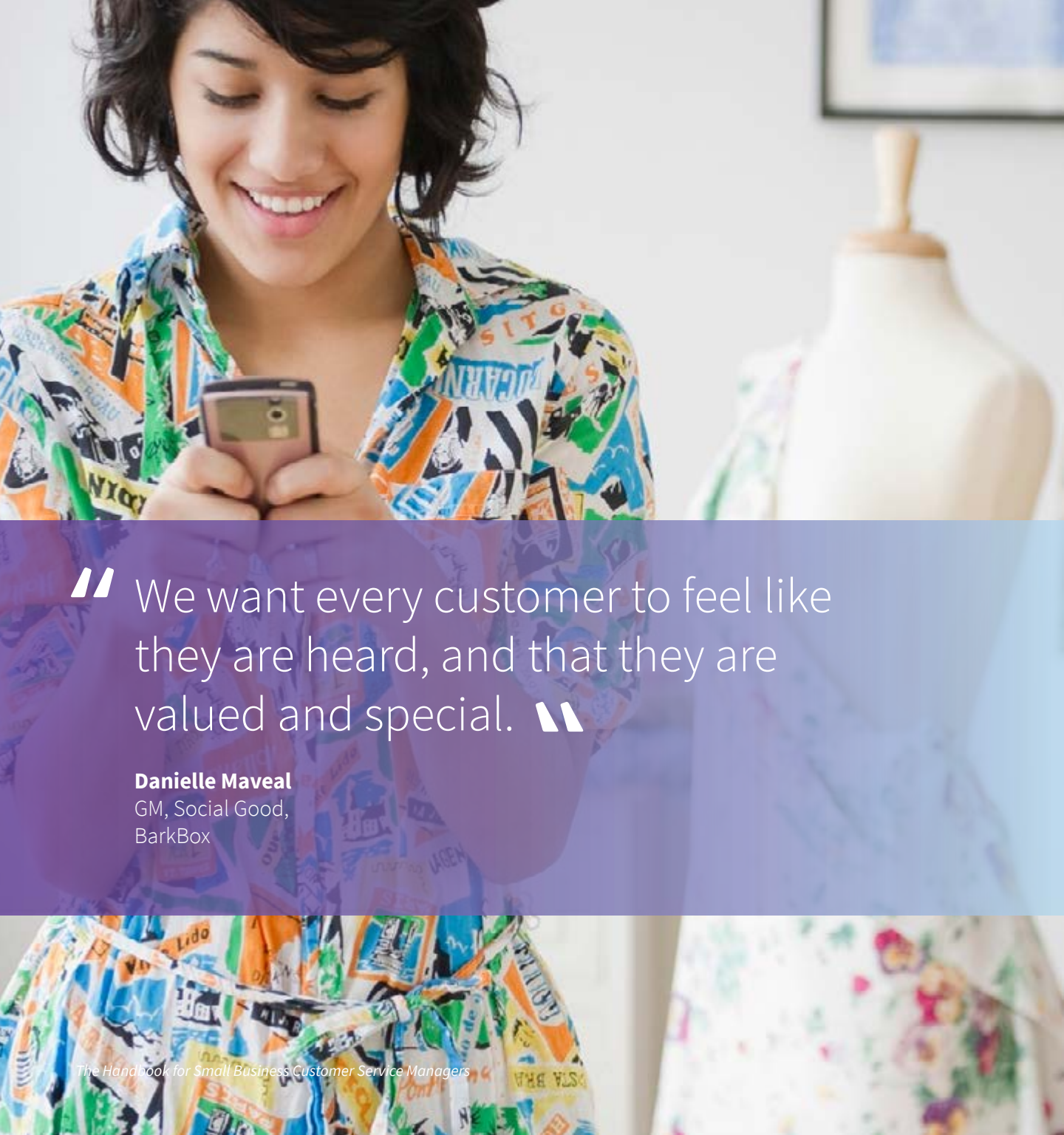
Kenny Van Zandt
Head of Operations,
Asana



Expanding support beyond your team can help you scale during busy times.

A key component to making customer support successful at a small business is making it easy for other teams to help you out when things get busy. Train employees at your company to participate in customer service from day one. Everyone from the CEO to the receptionist to the person who does payroll should be prepared to pitch in during busy times. Ideally, customer service training should be part of your onboarding process, but even if it’s not, you can still order some pizzas on a Friday afternoon and get everyone trained so they are ready to jump in to help customers at a moment’s notice.





“ We want every customer to feel like they are heard, and that they are valued and special. ”

Danielle Maveal

GM, Social Good,
BarkBox



Delivering fast, personalized service is table stakes in today's world.

Today's uberconnected customers expect even small companies to offer fast, personalized responses. It's important to get a customer service solution that's easy to use and optimized for mobile so you have screaming fast response times, even during the middle of the night or on the weekend. And remember that support is often an untapped channel for creating a closer connection to customers. Some of the most successful startups blend standard responses with personalized communications so they can build their brand personality and strengthen relationships with every correspondence.



“ People feel a more personal connection via social networks than they do when they call you on the phone, not to mention it is much faster. ”

Haily Hayman
Community Manager,
Susty Party



Engaging on every channel isn't just marketing speak, it's an imperative.

“Meet customers where they are,” is one of the biggest clichés of modern marketing. Anyone can set up a Facebook page or Twitter account and market to their customers. But to move the needle you need to offer content that educates, not sells. If you meet a customer online, offer fast, personalized service, just as you would if they called you on the phone or walked into your store. Everything on social channels is amplified, so it's important that you show customers (and their followers) that you care. Email and phone are still the primary channels for support but done right, social offers an unparalleled opportunity to build and extend your relationships.



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